

Scholarly Propagation of Literary Poetry in Modern and Romantic Periods

Undergraduate Research Thesis

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By

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INTRODUCTION

LINES, SCHOLARLY PROPAGATION, AND MEANING

What makes one line of poetry more popular to a scholarly audience than another? How does popularity, or the number of times a specific line of poetry has been propagated by scholars, coincide with meaning? This project will explore how literary scholars propagate poems from two literary periods (Modern and Romantic periods) within published scholarly work, mainly published in journals released in the 20th and early 21st centuries which are both accessible and searchable online. The goal is to analyze how an important literary form which both speaks to and reflects upon the human experience, as is perceived by scholars to generate meaning. In this sense, scholarly propagation coincides with both meaning and the human experience in the sense that, in analyzing/interpreting a poem, scholars reveal their own reactions to poetry which, by definition, contain implicit biases. For example, sometimes a line of poetry is propagated more in one period than another period from emerging schools of thought, i.e. the feminist interpretation of “Anecdote of the Jar” rose to prominence in the 1940s. At other times, specific lines are focused on regardless of period, such as the inscription on Ramses II’s statue in “Ozymandias.” Both scenarios, though, reveal something about the human experience. In one scenario, “Anecdote of the Jar” reveals the ongoing concern for women’s rights which came to prominence during the Women’s Suffrage movement, whereas, in the other scenario, “Ozymandias” reveals the human thirst for knowledge and understanding of the past. Thus, poetic propagation is rooted in both space and time, which illustrates that meaning coincides with the human experience. My goal, then, is to analyze the scholarly propagation of poetic lines and draw meaning from the resultant data, assuming that scholarly propagation is a marker of both meaning and the human experience.

POETRY AND THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Poetry speaks to the human experience via engaging its audience and providing meaning. As Gary Shapiro informs in “Hegel on the Meanings of Poetry,” there are three main philosophical views of poetry: poetry as nonsensical or lyrical meaning or differentiated cognitive analysis. The third philosophical view “is a form of absolute spirit in which knowledge is thorough self-knowledge...” (Shapiro 88). Moreover, it is the view most scholars ascribe to. I will address all philosophical views in relation to and utilized to analyze individual poems and time periods, as, for example, nonsensical meaning has largely gained popularity within poetry in the Modern and Post-Modern periods, even if this feature is still rather exceptional. After all, these views are not incompatible—lyrical meaning can be used as a tool from which self-knowledge is constructed, just as self-knowledge can be contained or read from nonsensical stanzas. As I alluded to earlier, the obscure lines in “Anecdote of the Jar” are often applied to modern and historical schools of thought. Marguerite Foster, in the journal article “Poetry and Emotive Meaning,” argues “the effect produced by the poem is a function of many elements combined... in some poetry the sounds of words, together with the ordinary conventional meanings... serve to reinforce each other to produce the [poem’s] effect” (660). Gary Shapiro points to the complexities of poetic form. So does C.K. Williams who, in the article “Poetry And Consciousness,” concludes “A poem is a wonderfully complicated instrument... It also shares many characteristics with emotion.” (28). Poetry, therefore, reflects upon life’s complexities through its use of sound poetic form and the formation of larger elements, such as lines and meaning.

In quantitatively analyzing how scholars make meaning out of poetry, it is important to focus on how a language can impact different scholars differently. This is because “The way we

[as individuals] generally experience language in consciousness is of itself of interest in terms of our emotional life” (Williams 27). In other words, poetry invites personal responses based on an individual reader’s prior experiences and emotions—scholars included. Poetry, through speaking to the human experience via engaging its audience and providing meaning, oftentimes contains formulaic structure (i.e. sonnets, rhyme schemes) and common themes (such as love and death). As such, different time periods utilize these elements differently. In the scope of my project, I focused on how line length and position related to one another regardless of the aforementioned differences, such as theme. I selected the Romantic and Modern literary periods, as both encompass popular poetry, have different distinct features (such as rigidly following vs. breaking traditional form), and are separated by the Victorian literary period, ensuring authors are not miscategorized by fitting into trivial dates (as the Romantic period, by my definition, extends deep into the Victorian period). Each period is important to my project in the sense that some of the most anthologized poems, and therefore scholarly propagations, are from each of these periods.

THE ROMANTIC PERIOD

For the purpose of this project, I defined the Romantic period as the time period between 1750 and 1870. This period encompasses the Industrial Revolution, which was accompanied by revolutionary spirit and other social trends. Perhaps the revolution most supported by literary work occurred in this time period the French Revolution. Social trends, on the other hand, included looking towards nature, an increase in individuality, and a turn from conventional religion. "A Brief Guide to Romanticism" gives a general description of the era rather well.

"Romantic poets cultivated individualism, reverence for the natural world, idealism, physical and emotional passion, and an interest in the mystic and supernatural. Romantics set themselves in opposition to the order and rationality of classical and neoclassical artistic precepts to embrace freedom and revolution in their art and politics."

The Industrial Revolution brought about some unintended social consequences which made their way into poetry. This poetry, and these attitudes, are still with us today, as is shown through the continued popularity of works written within the period.

Specifically, Romantic poetry is known for its use of doctrinal elements, usually abstracted from scripture or normative religious beliefs, open-endedness, and focus on complex diction and structural rigidity, or conformity to specific rhyme schemes, meter, and form. L.J.

Swingle, though, argues that the two main features of Romantic poetry are as follows.

"The first of these is an attempt to disrupt a reader's equilibrium, to break down his sense of order and cast doubt upon the doctrines he holds when he comes to the poetry... The second dominant movement in Romantic poetry is an attempt to grasp the experiential data [or themes/subjects which connect to a reader's life as he or she experiences it] that underlie the doctrinal constructs men impose upon the cosmos" (977-978).

Swingle continues to claim that all poetry is full of doctrinal elements; however, “[Romantic poetry] employs doctrine to generate an atmosphere of the open question” in order to further call into question a reader’s beliefs (975). Romantic poetry, then, is considered by scholars to be interesting from “[providing] a strong challenge to man’s ability to come up with answers, to construct patterns of doctrine out of the raw data of experience” (Swingle 980). Thus, Romantic poetry is intended to be emotionally challenging to read, as it drags its readers out of their comfort zones—much like the Industrial Revolution dragged the general population, and sometime poets, out of their comfort in the countryside and thrust them into the heart of growing, criticized cities. In conclusion, Romantic poetry spoke to the human experience by reproducing, questioning, and criticizing their time. As such, subsequent propagation by scholars often, although not always, continue to revolve around these elements. In relation to my project, understanding that scholars like Swingle view Romantic poetry allows me to potentially make sense of how scholarly propagation is affected by the features scholars note about scholarly poetry.

THE MODERN PERIOD

The Modern period, for the purpose of this project, is defined at the time period between 1902 and 1965. Both periods were defined by substantial social ruptures; in this period, these social ruptures are World War I and, to a lesser extent, the collapse of the British Empire. These events happened after years of tension easily felt by the public. "A Brief Guide to Modernism" explains how these events began to impact the human experience.

“English novelist Virginia Woolf declared that human nature underwent a fundamental change ‘on or about December 1910.’ The statement testifies to the modern writer’s fervent desire to break with the past, rejecting literary traditions that seemed outmoded and diction that seemed too genteel to suit an era of technological breakthroughs and global violence.”

In short, the horrors felt by nations as tension turned to wars and protests led to a rejection of the norms which, although conformed to by many people, still allowed such chaos to happen. On top of this, Walter Gierasch, in the article “Reading Modern Poetry,” explains that “More than ever in the history of poetry in English are poets abreast in the world around them. Their consciousness of their world demands of the reader an equal conciseness” (36). As the world splintered and poets witnessed different humans and their life experiences within different nation-states, they began to change their style in order to reflect upon a new modernity. As such, their writing contained features of the inclusion of nonsensical phrases, departure from rigid structural forms, and the turn to the mundane.

Specifically, Walter Gierasch argues that, out of all of the features of Modern poetry, the “Most interesting and most perplexing to the reader of modern poetry is the consequent disappearance of expressions of satisfying personal love, of unselfish friendship, of the fireside

home, and the other shibboleths... of the age of individualism” (30). In this conclusion, he also argues “As always, the poet’s purpose today is to define his relation to life or express his view of it. Frequently, a reader forgets that life no longer allows such direct observation and conclusion as it did in the not-so-distant past” (Gierasch 30). In other words, poets within the Modern period began to radically change the form and themes of their poetry in order to speak to a radically changing human experience, one which provides more technological advancements at the costs of limiting individualism and hindering personally satisfying personal relationships. For my project, understanding the normative conventions which scholars, such as Walter Gierasch, look for in poems from this period is valuable in the sense that it potentially allows me to understand why scholars propagate some lines more than others.

GOALS

ANALYZING SCHOLARSHIP

Little has been written in the ways of how scholars agree upon how and where a poem generates its meaning in the broad sense, as in how meaning is generated by a group of poems. However (and somewhat paradoxically), much has been written about how a poem generates meaning in regards to individual poems. Two of the most popular poems within the corpus are analyzed below in regards to where literary scholars agree meaning is held, and whether or not this meaning coincides with a line's or lines' popularity. The goal behind conducting these analyses is to illustrate how meaning can either be fixed to a few ideas within a poem or can remain open for several versions of interpretation. In the first case, meaning would vary depending upon how a scholar interprets a poem, whereas the latter case would be present regardless of how a scholar interprets a poem

"Ozymandias," a sonnet written by Percy Bysshe Shelley in the Romantic period, describes a fallen statue of a king within the desert next to an inscription which reads "My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings; / Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!" Johnstone Parr, in the article "Shelley's 'Ozymandias,'" mentions that "Historians and archeologists of the twentieth century seem to be agreed that Ozymandias is the Greek name for the notorious Egyptian pharaoh Ramses II" (32). Parr goes on to argue that Shelley probably never visited the statue and, as such, probably got his source material in another poem or traveling historian. William Freedman, in the article "Postponement and Perspectives in Shelley's 'Ozymandias,'" agrees that this is inherently the interesting aspect of the poem, as he claims that "What little study the poem has stimulated has been devoted chiefly to the quest for sources, predictably in the accounts of traveler-historians, for Shelley's powerful description of the shattered statue and

its suggestive inscription” (63). In short, both Parr and Freedman are aware of current scholarship for Shelley’s poem and where current literary effort is focused. This is telling in the sense that poetic meaning, although individualized through human experience and emotions, also transcends different schools of thought in the sense that the line has relatively the same meaning in its scholarly propagations regardless of the scholar’s school of thought.

“Anecdote of the Jar,” a twelve line poem written by Wallace Stevens in the Modern period, has been read in many different ways—from meta-commentary upon writing to a critique of male dominance. Patricia Merivale argues in the article “Wallace Stevens’ ‘Jar’: The Absurd Detritus of Romantic Myth” that “There are two [dominant] schools of thought on Stevens’ poem...” and that the dominant school of thought sees the jar as a Grecian Urn which brings order out of the wilderness’ disorder (527). In other words, the jar sets the world (open for interpretation) into order (what is being set in order is also open for interpretation). Samuel Keyser has something different to say; in his article “Wallace Stevens: Form and Meaning in Four Poems,” he argues that “The most obvious feature of the poem is the unnatural word order of the first line” (586). He goes on to conclude that the poem’s form does not provide any meaning. According to Keyser, the poem should be analyzed structurally, as it lacks substantial analytical meaning, or meaning which can be concluded from the poem’s imagery and story. Therefore, this poem illustrates that meaning is not always neatly held or tied into a singular line, idea, or ideas. Not all poems are as straightforward as “Ozymandias,” just as not all poems are as vague as “Anecdote of the Jar.” My research reveals that poems are rarely interpreted as straightforwardly as “Ozymandias,” as few others contain such a defining peak in scholarly propagations.

POETIC FORM IN RELATION TO PROPAGATION

Another goal behind my project is to compare the frequency by which scholars cite Romantic and Modern poetry. Moreover, I would like to explore how poems of different line lengths are propagated differently. In regards to the latter point, Helen Vendler, in her article ““Matter on Various Length Scales: Poetry,”” describes the line length of a normative poem to be rather short.

“For reasons that continue to interest linguists and psychologists, the normative poem in English tends to run between twelve and sixteen lines. Such a length has proved sufficient to express, with some complexity of utterance, a set of human responses to some provocation” (390-391).

A goal of the project is to see whether or not Vendler’s claims can be validated in the ways in which scholars propagate poetry.

Not much scholarship has been written comparing the two in statistical terms in regards to propagation differences between the two periods. However, it is my guess that the Modern period will contain more propagated poetry, as it was closer to current history and has only recently come to a close.

RELATED WORK

Not much computational work has been done with analyzing poetry. Mary Harris, one scholar, did do computational work with poetry in “Analysis of the Discourse Structure of Lyric Poetry,” which illustrated that Grosz and Sidner’s theories of discourse are mostly applicable to lyric poetry, albeit not so much as general discourse. In the project, Harris segmented poems into linguistic utterances and rhymes and applied Grosz and Sidner’s claims. This project is relevant to my work in the sense that quantitative analysis of poetry can, and does, contain elements, such as multiple information sources, which create textual, as opposed to the reader’s goal-oriented, meaning. However, only a few poems were studied in applying the theory. Natalie Houston, on her webpage “From Visualizing the Cultural Field of Victorian Poetry,” computationally explored the geographic and cultural similarities of anthologized Victorian poets. In this sense, her project is related to my work in the sense that she was interested in how different authors and their poems are viewed by scholars. However, her project was not concerned with the meaning of individual poems.

Computational work seems to be focused on either creating poetry or analyzing literature in general. Although there are numerous examples of both computational literary analysis and poetry creation, Nathaniel Scharping describes a rather complex and ambitious data-mining project which argues that only six story arcs define western novels. My project is similar in the sense that I am interested in finding patterns in how poetry is propagated, but different in the sense that I am focused on poetic propagation, not the reoccurring patterns within the works themselves. In terms of creating literature, the UC Berkeley School of Information describes the complex processes, such as selecting suitable parts of speech and words to create a sensible line, which go into creating a program which can generate poetry. However, the school also mentions

that the field is still limited, as computer generated poetry is still discernable from traditionally written poetry. My project does not involve literary text generation, but could benefit the field if I find where scholars most devote their attention when propagating poetry.

METHODOLOGY

SELECTING POEMS

I randomly selected two hundred and fifty poems for each literary period from the Poetry Foundation's online platform. "The site includes an archive of over 11,000 poems and over 2,500 biographies, and users can search and browse according to poem subject matter and forms" ("Poetry Foundation"). I selected the Poetry Foundation because it is easy to access by casual readers and scholars, does not contain much obscure, or little-known, and hereby poems unknown by most members of the scholarly community, poetry, and defines its poems according to their literary period.

After selection, I narrowed down the corpus of five hundred poems to two hundred and eighty three poems (121 in the Romantic period, 162 in the Modern period) because the vast majority of each period's poems was set between five and twenty-four lines. The median line length of poems within the Modern period was 21 lines, whereas the median line length of poems in the Romantic period was 24.5 lines. For this measurement, line breaks were not excluded. Thus, roughly over half of the poems, when line breaks were considered, fell into this bracket, whereas a little less than half fell into the bracket between twenty-five and a few hundred lines—the larger distribution not allowing me to accurately compare individual line lengths between periods. Helen Vendler's claim, then, was proven to be mostly applicable to scholarly propagation as well—nuances will be described later. Once the corpus was reduced, each line of the remaining poems was then checked for scholarly propagation on JSTOR.

FINDING PROPAGATION

I then used the JSTOR database to search for scholarly propagation. JSTOR offers an extensive database that provides access to most literary academic journals. ITC explains the site's missions.

“JSTOR's mission is to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in information technologies. JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization with a dual mission to create and maintain a trusted archive of important scholarly journals, and to provide access to these journals as widely as possible.”

JSTOR is also easily searchable through automated means—the site relies upon the PHP post method, allowing for terms to be manipulated through variables within the URL itself.

CRITERIA FOR HITS

Each full line was searched as an entire phrase, along with the author, to limit possible false-positives. Both the full line and the author had to appear within an article on JSTOR in order for a hit to be obtained. However, the search for any given line was only conducted if the line was at least sixteen characters long (including spaces), once common words were removed, in order to prevent unrelated works which could also use said phrase as a scholarly propagation. Additionally, lines which were the poem's title were removed in order to prevent a search of all articles which mentioned the poem two or more times.

COMPARISON

Each period was compared against each other for each line length, so far as both period had a minimum of four poems to represent each line length. Since outliers were present from anthologized works being present within the group of many more non-anthologized works, each comparison was done through comparing the medians of each group—meaning that the outliers would not skew the results and would not only reflect themselves. Instead of relying upon line length on the X axis, the percent through the poem was utilized to allow for the comparison of between different line lengths.

RESULTS

THE CORPUS

The resultant corpus validated Helen Vendler's claim, as the majority of its poems were between 5 and 24 lines in length; however, a peak in poems at 24 lines in length complicate her claim in the sense that poems outside of her given range are also widely propagated, and can hereby be considered normative, as well. More research into the (un)normative state of poems propagated at and beyond twenty-four lines is needed. The Figure 1, included below, illustrates the frequency of poems at each line length within the corpus.

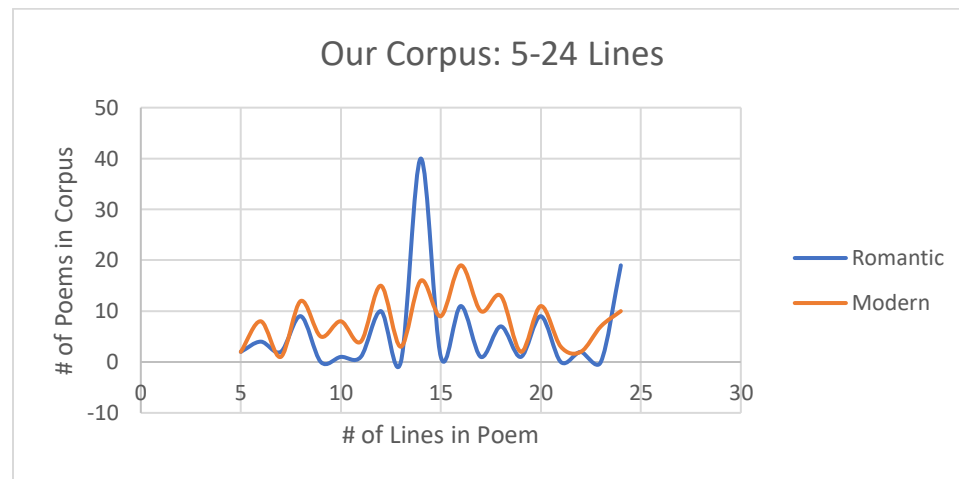


Figure 1. Graph Showing Corpus' Distribution of Poems of Different Line Lengths. Note the peak for the Romantic period at 14 lines and the peak for the Modern period at 16 lines; even so, a resurgence of 24 line poems complicate Helen Vendler's claim.

Beyond Vendler, the Modern period ended up being roughly twice as much as the Romantic period. Table 1, included below, includes a broad overview of the corpus before it was limited to poems between five to twenty-four lines in length.

Romantic Period	Modern Period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 Different Authors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37 Different Authors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250->121 Poems [5-24 Lines in Length] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 250->162 Poems [5-24 Lines in Length]
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median Max Scholarly Propagation Per Poem: 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median Max Scholarly Propagation Per Poem: 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average Max: 5.9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average Max: 9.7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median Poem Length (W/ Line Breaks): 24.5 Lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Median Poem Length (W/ Line Breaks): 21 Lines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average Length (W/ Line Breaks): 40.9 Lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average Length (W/ Line Breaks): 35.3 Lines

Table 1. Corpus Statistics. Note the similarities between the periods, with the exception of propagation.

As shown, the poems within the corpus have been written by a similar number of authors, are around the same line length, and are roughly reduced by the same amount. The exception is the amount of propagation each period gets. However, JSTOR has not digitized many original sources from the Romantic period—helping to explain part of the discrepancy.

SONNETS

Poems with fourteen lines can easily be categorized as sonnets, as most 14-line poems are sonnets. To prove this claim in regards to sonnets, the syntax usage (in the way of ending sentences) of the poems within the corpus was conducted. The results are illustrated in Figure 2 below.

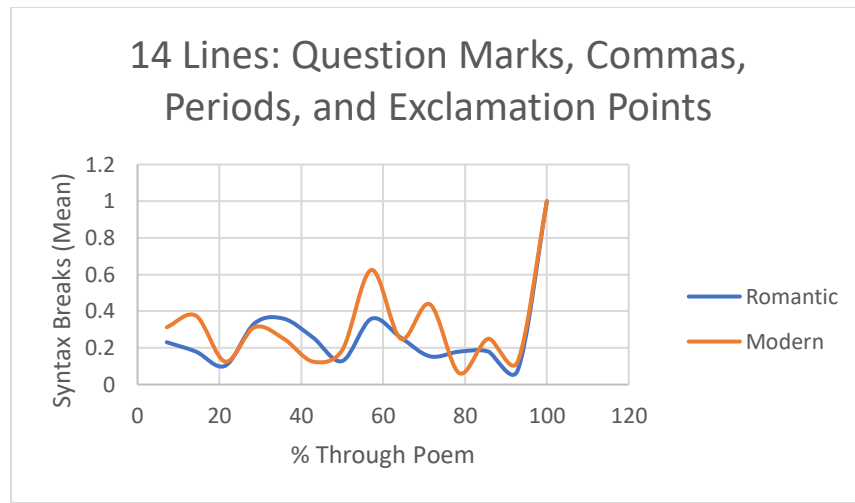


Figure 2. Usage of Ending Syntax within the Corpus of 14 Line Poems. Note how the patterns coincide.

As shown, the syntactical usage of both periods coincide, especially with common sonnet forms.

However, the point of the analysis is not to prove this point, as strong correlations have been proven elsewhere. Instead, the point is to show how meaning is held in relation to the form of the sonnet. As mentioned below, the sonnet was the most popular form in the corpus for the Romantic period, containing thirty-nine poems. The sonnet was popular within the Modern period as well, but to a lesser extent: this period contained sixteen poems. The distribution of the sonnet within the two literary periods is illustrated below in Figure 3.

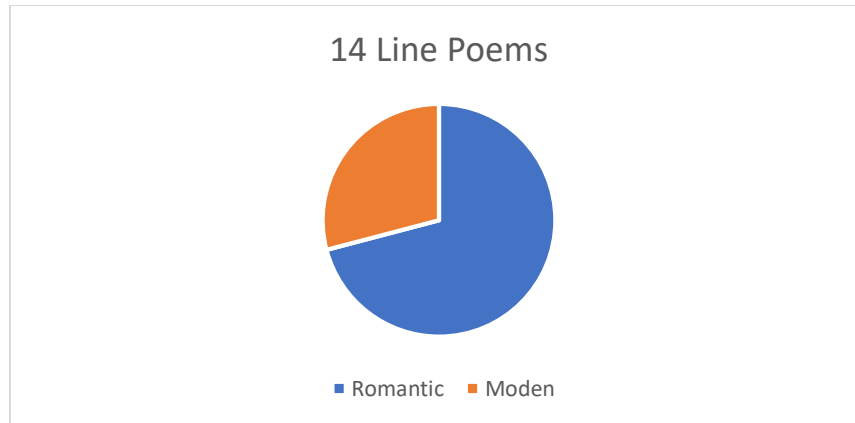


Figure 3. Visual Representation of Sonnet Distribution.

Just as the distribution was different, so was the scholarly interpretation of the meaning of sonnets. Figure 4, included below, illustrates the differences between the scholarly propagation of poems from each period.

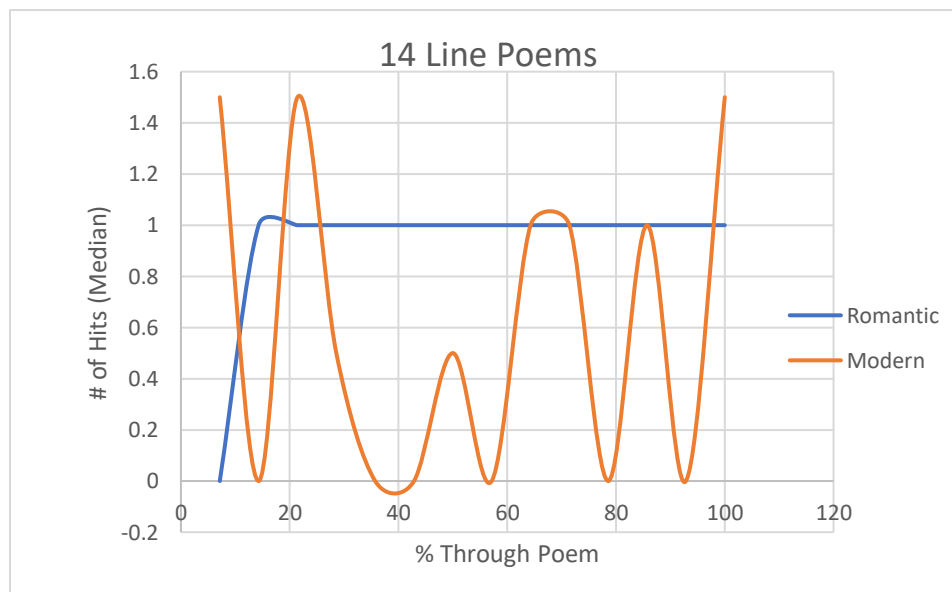


Figure 4. Scholarly Propagation of Sonnets. Notice the drastic differences of propagation between the two periods.

Romantic sonnets were propagated evenly from start to finish, with the exception of the first line (which oftentimes served as the sonnet's title, and was therefore cut from searches). On the other hand, sonnets from the Modern period were mainly quoted in relation to its structure, with one

exception—the third line of Modern sonnets appeared to be one of the most popular lines and does not coincide with any common sonnet form. Perhaps its propagation increase comes from scholars being interested in how the poem's introduction is complicated or contradicted; perhaps scholars believe that the third line is where Modern authors begin to subvert traditional sonnet structure. Either way, these differences illustrate that scholars tend to think of Romantic sonnets as a whole unit, whereas Modern poems are thought of more as parts. One of these parts may be syntax in the terms of ending sentences, as, even though Modern sonnets used less exclamatory language, they still used slightly more ending syntax than Romantic sonnets. Other possible areas which Modern sonnets may be broken down by are rhymes, figurative language, and the like. My guess is that all of these elements play a role in how scholars view sonnets from each period, in addition to what L.J. Swingle argues the Romantic period's goal of challenging a reader's views on the world inherently taking more lines to accomplish than what Walter Gierasch argues the Modern period's goal of portraying changes in the human experience.

12 LINE POEMS

Twelve line poems appeared to be very popular propagation wise in the Modern period, but not as much in the Romantic period. Figure 5, included below, represents this point.

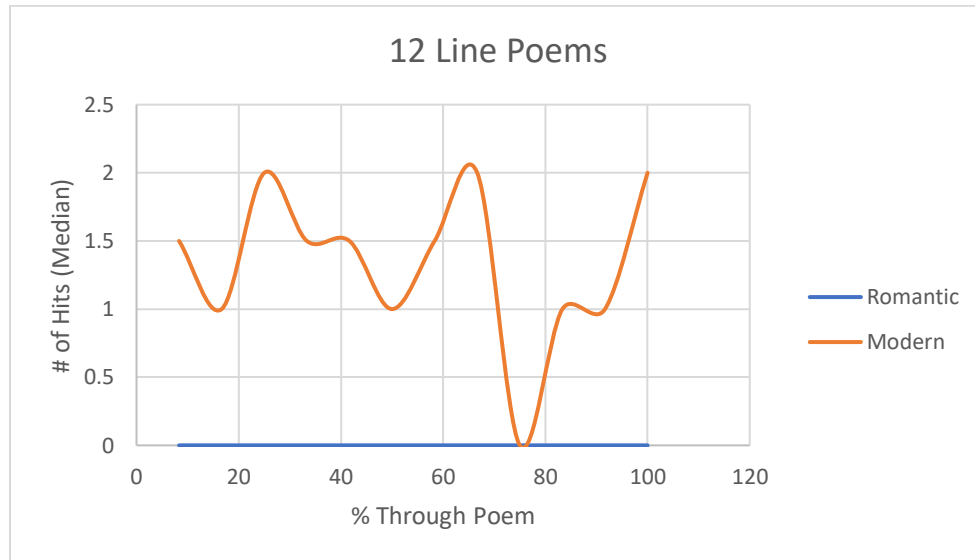


Figure 5. Scholarly Propagation of Twelve Line Poems. Note how the Romantic period's median number of scholarly propagation at each line length remains 0.

The Romantic period's twelve line poems are very much unpropagated, or in some cases rarely propagated, on the whole, probably because sonnets and other formal forms are seen by scholars as more important than the forms contained within twelve-line poems. William Blake's poems "The Garden of Love" and "The Clod and the Pebble," however, are clear exceptions, as illustrated in Figure 6. While poems by other authors only got a maximum of one propagation, Blake's poems received a maximum of sixteen and nine propagations respectively.

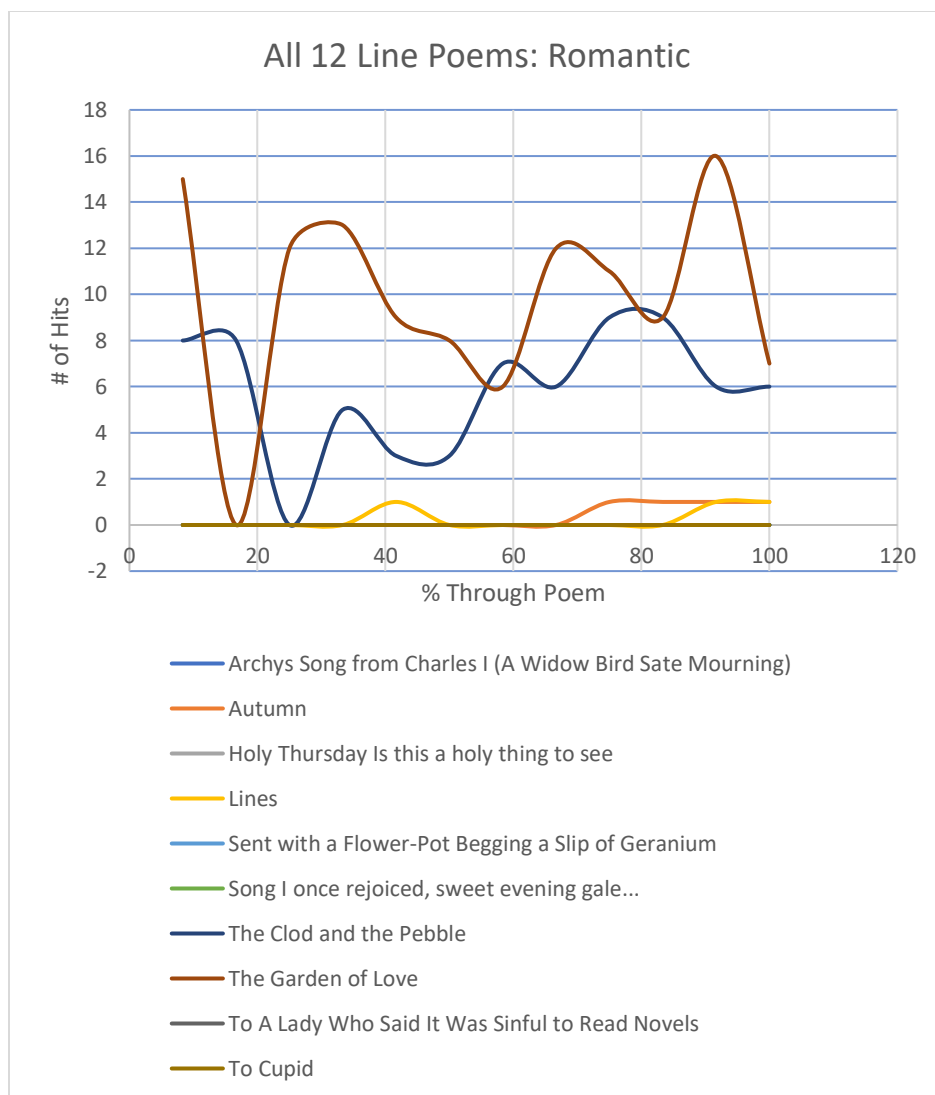


Figure 6. Scholarly Propagation of Twelve Line Poems in the Romantic Period. The two notable exceptions are both poems written by William Blake.

Blake, as an exception, illustrates how future literary movements can come to redefine the poetry of prior literary movements. Although Blake’s poetry was unpopular in its time, its resultant “rediscovery” by the Bloomsbury group thrust it into the early Modern period and, as such, exposed his work to early Modernist critiques. Although Blake lived and wrote within the Romantic period, his poetry is now oftentimes defined by Modernist standards—again revealing that scholarly definitions do change, along with propagation and the subsequent assumption of

meaning. Even so, this appears to be more common amongst extremely popular poems, such as “Ozymandias” and “Acerote of the Jar,” which almost always transcend their line length’s typical propagation pattern.

OTHER LINE LENGTHS

More research is needed to draw firm conclusions within these other line lengths. That being said, poetry from these line lengths tended to match in pattern across the literary periods, such as Figure 7 and Figure 8. Some, such as Figure 9 and 10, follow roughly the same pattern towards the end of the poem, but not the beginning. Others, such as Figures 11 and 12, are fully differentiated on the basis of scholarly propagation. This leads me to believe that scholarly interpretation is similar across periods for shorter poems, but not for longer ones. However, as mentioned before, more research is needed to validate this conclusion.

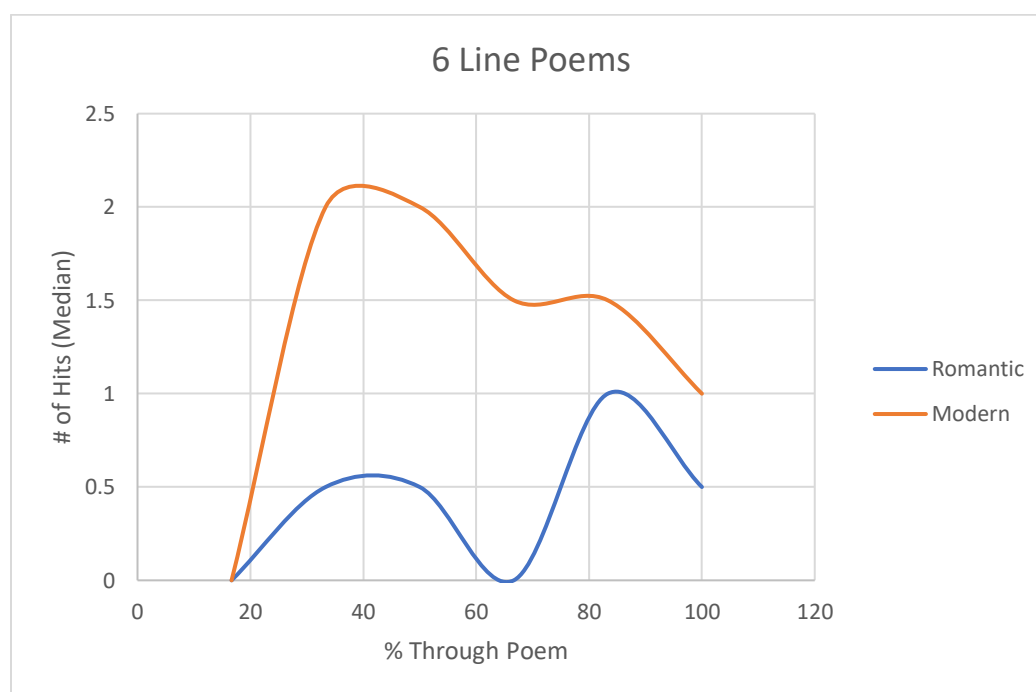


Figure 7. Scholarly Propagation of Six Line Poems. Note how they follow the same pattern.

Poems which contained six lines followed the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. The only real discrepancy comes from the Modern period reaching its maximum number of propagations at lines two and three and the Romantic period reaching its maximum number of propagations at line five. However, this is probably due to the small sample size with the Romantic side reflects (four poems). The Modern period reflected upon twice as many poems.



Figure 8. Scholarly Propagation of eight Line Poems. Note how they (roughly) follow the same pattern.

Poems which contained eight lines roughly followed the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. However, the Modern period's propagation changed less dramatically than that of the Romantic period. This graph reflects upon nine poems from the Romantic period and twelve poems from the Modern period.



Figure 9. Scholarly Propagation of Sixteen Line Poems. Note how they (roughly) follow the same pattern at the end, but are differentiated at the start.

Poems which contained sixteen lines roughly followed the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. However, the graphs are inverted from about ten to forty percent, reflecting upon a major change in propagation—scholars propagate lines from this section in Romantic poetry, but not Modern poetry. This graph reflects upon eleven poems from the Romantic period and nineteen poems from the Modern period.

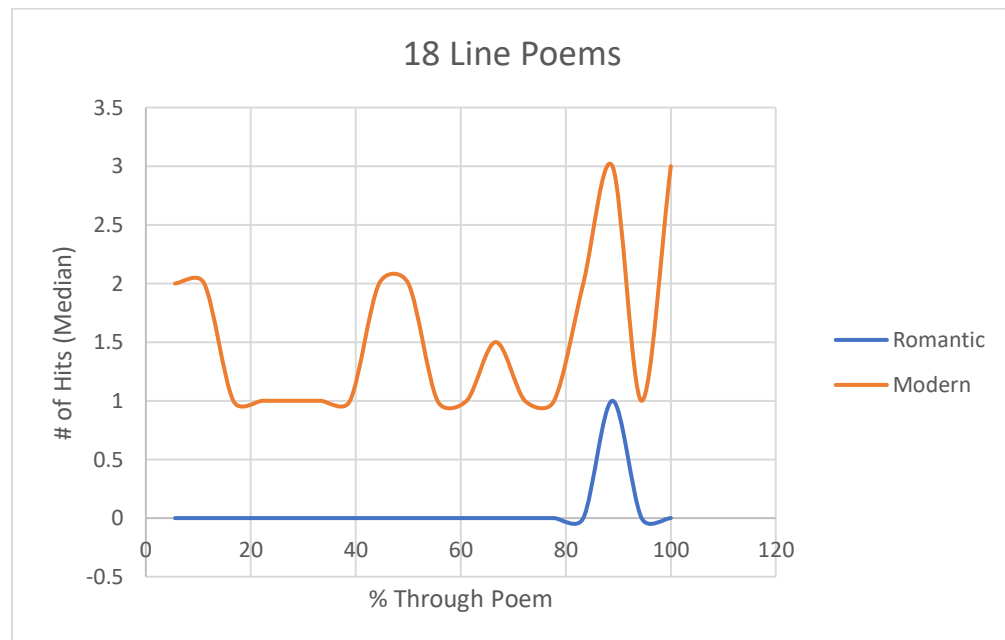


Figure 10. Scholarly Propagation of Eighteen Line Poems. Note how they (roughly) follow the same pattern at the end, but are differentiated at the start.

Poems which contained eighteen lines did not follow the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. Romantic scholars hardly quoted poetry of this line length; their only real interest is at line sixteen, a line which also interests Modern scholars. This graph reflects upon seven poems from the Romantic period and thirteen poems from the Modern period.

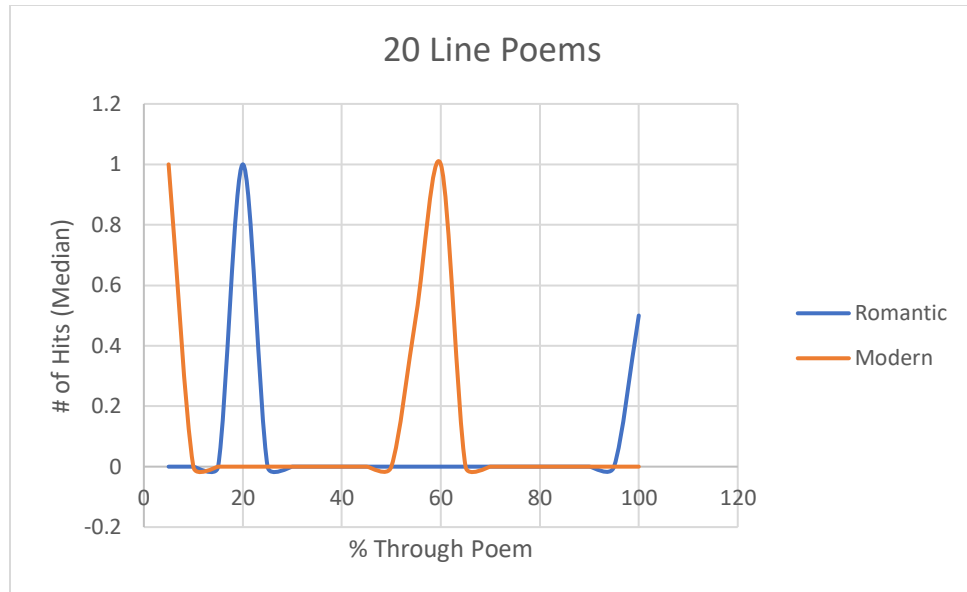


Figure 11. Scholarly Propagation of Twenty Line Poems. Note how the two periods do not coincide.

Poems which contained twenty lines did not follow the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. There is no shared interest between scholars from either period. This graph reflects upon nine poems from the Romantic period and twelve poems from the Modern period.

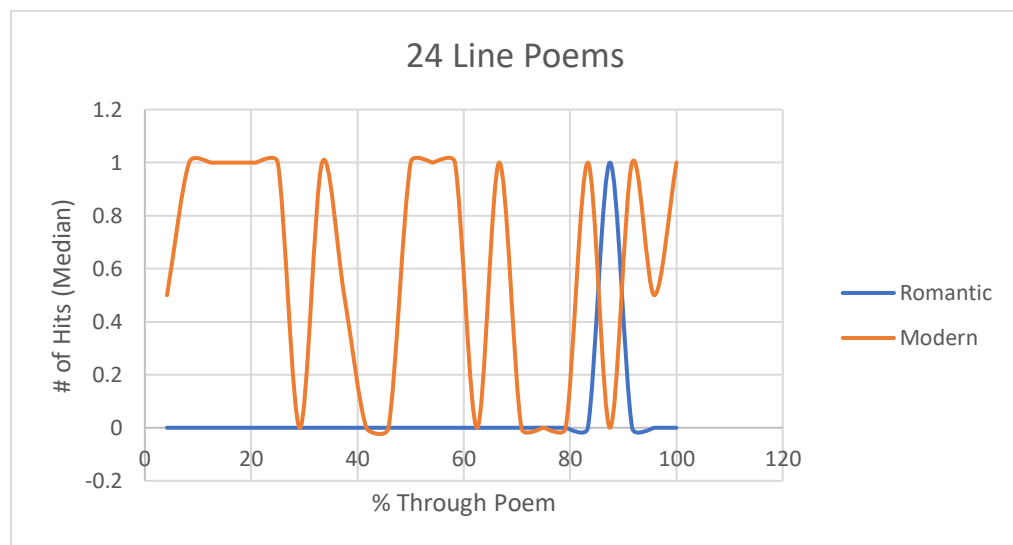


Figure 12. Scholarly Propagation of Twenty-four Line Poems. Note how the two periods do not coincide.

Poems which contained twenty-four lines did not follow the same propagation pattern throughout both periods. There is no shared interest between scholars from either period, as illustrated by the dramatic inverse at line twenty-one. This graph reflects upon nineteen poems from the Romantic period and eleven poems from the Modern period.

CONCLUSION

DISCRETE VS. INDISCRETE ELEMENTS

My project reveals that scholars tend to propagate poetry on the basis of discrete and indiscrete elements. Discrete elements are confined to a specific line, such as diction and syntax, whereas indiscrete elements, such as meter and rhyme scheme, are not. For instance, in Figure 6 the poem “Lines,” written by Hartley Coleridge, contains a singular scholarly propagation at line 5 (line 6, if line breaks are included). No other propagation occurs until the poem’s final two lines. As such, the line, which reads “Because I bear my Father’s name” is propagated from a discrete element, probably the inclusion of doctoral language, specifically reference to the Father. On the other hand, “The Garden of Love,” written by William Blake, peaks in scholarly propagation at line 11 (line 13, including line breaks). However, the lines before and after line 11 are also propagated. As such, the line, which reads “And Priests in black gowns, were walking their rounds” is likely propagated from its position in the poem, specifically in how it pertains to the poem’s conclusion. Thus, my project reveals that both discrete and indiscrete elements are important when analyzing scholarly propagation, as scholars take both into account when propagating a poetic work.

LINE LENGTH INCOMPATIBILITY

As is revealed through Figures 4-5, 7-12, poems of different line lengths follow different propagation patterns. As such, scholars do not view or propagate poetic work through following the same assumptions, such as features which they assume are present in a literary period. Instead, they focus somewhat on structure, as illustrated by Modern sonnets, in addition to discrete/indiscrete elements and points which interest them in regards to their school of thought or human experience.

TRANSCENDING PROPAGATION PATTERNS: WIDELY ANTHOLOGIZED POEMS

Although poems of different line lengths are seen differently by scholars, each line length for each period typically falls into a rough pattern. That being said, some poems which are widely anthologized transcend this pattern on the basis of the sheer number of propagations scholars publish. Refer to Figure 13 and 14 below.

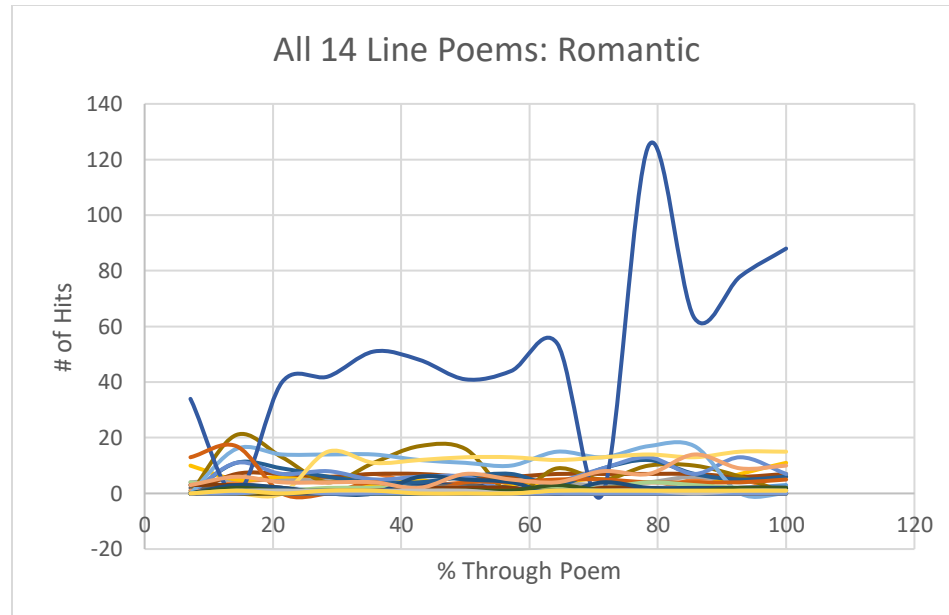


Figure 13. Scholarly Propagation of Fourteen Line Poems in the Romantic period. Note how “Ozymandias,” the poem represented by the dark blue line, transcends the other poems’ rough pattern.

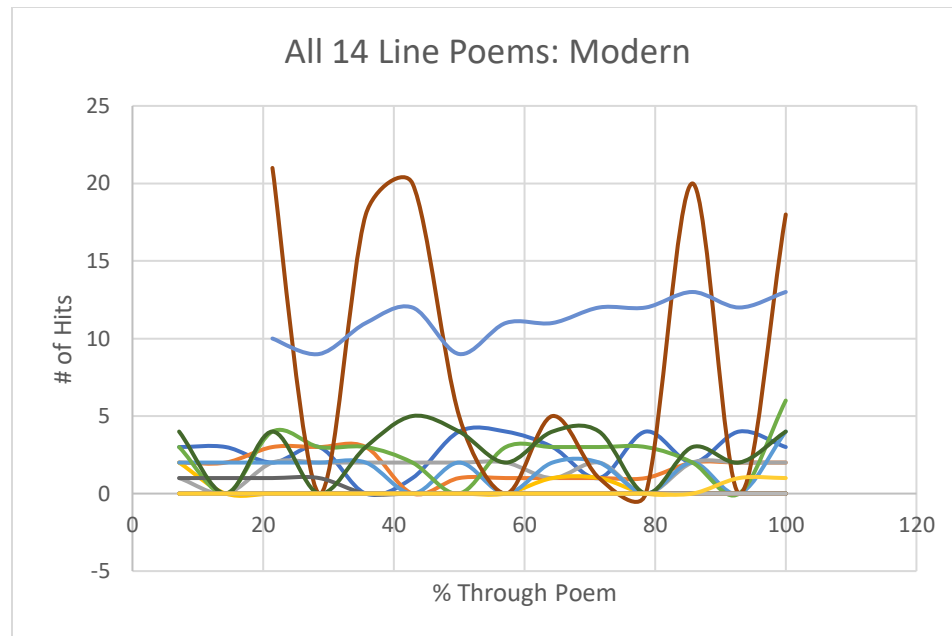


Figure 14. Scholarly Propagation of Fourteen Line Poems in the Modern period. Note how “Politics,” the poem represented by the brown line, and “The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain,” the poem represented by the light blue line, transcend the other poems’ rough pattern.

Although sonnets tend to follow roughly the same pattern, the most popular sonnets do not. This conclusion is not limited to sonnets, though, as it is present in most other line lengths as well. As such, scholarly propagation affects subsequent scholarly propagation and, therefore, the poem’s meaning in the eyes of scholars.

IMPACT

This project could potentially impact the field of Digital Humanities in a number of ways. First and foremost, it could provide the basis from which a summarization tool for poetry could be built on. Said tool could reveal the lines which scholars believe to hold more meaning, effectively shortening, or summarizing, a poem. For instance, revealed patterns could be put into building a summarization tool via what Nenkova calls a “query focused summarization” method. In this method, “the goal is to summarize only the information in the input document(s) that is relevant to a specific user query” (106). In this way, results could be determined based off of an input poem’s time period and number of lines. Although most traditional summarization methods would not always apply well to poetry, the in-depth study of poetic forms may provide a foundation from which to weight certain methods (i.e. giving additional weight to syntax usage with Modern sonnets).

In addition, this project could be used as the basis to compare scholarly propagation amongst poetry against popular propagation of poetry. Such a comparison could possibly show that poetic meaning is perceived differently by the general public than by literary scholars.

Alternatively, this project could provide the foundation from which scholars can turn to a more holistic analysis of poetry—revealing common structural themes based on percentage through the poem which would otherwise go unnoticed.

CALL FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As with almost any project, I am left with more questions than answers. What exactly are the features which cause Modern sonnets to be viewed as parts, not as wholes? Why does the scholarly propagation of Modern sonnets peak in their third line? Do scholars' propagations, and therefore opinions, really change as poems from different periods become longer in length? Only further research will reveal the answers.

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